

***Health Protection Amendment will start debate on fundamental question:
Is health care in America a privilege or a right?***

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum (MN-04) introduced the *Health Protection Amendment*

(
[H.J.Res. 42](#)
)

,
an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would make health care a right for all Americans.

"In the wealthiest nation in the world, health care should be a right for all our citizens, not a special privilege based on economic status," McCollum said today. "This amendment will establish a basic guarantee of health care for all Americans as the framework for a broad health care debate both in Congress and state legislatures. The right to health care must be the foundation on which any long term, effective system is built."

The text of McCollum's proposed amendment simply states:

"Health care, including care to prevent and treat illness, is the right of all citizens of the United States and necessary to ensure the strength of the Nation."

The current U.S. health care system is broken. America spends far more than any other nation on health care—nearly \$2 trillion per year—but ranks below all major industrialized nations and just above the United Arab Emirates when it comes to life expectancy and other important health indicators. More than 50 million Americans are temporarily or permanently without health insurance.

In Minnesota, hospitals provided nearly \$200 million in uncompensated care for the uninsured in 2005, and these costs have risen almost 50 percent in the past two years. "Rep. McCollum serves the interest of Minnesota and the entire nation by initiating a discussion that could ultimately lead to affordable health insurance for every American," said Bruce Reuben,

President of the Minnesota Hospital Association. "We're proud of her leadership on this issue."

In a recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll, Americans said health care is one of the top domestic concerns that the U.S. government needs to address. "Access to affordable health care is a priority for our families and communities," Rep. McCollum said in a letter to congressional colleagues. "It should be a priority for Congress."

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